



INTERNAL REVIEW PROCEDURES OF THE MEAT GRADING AND CERTIFICATION BRANCH

PURPOSE

Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch services play a significant role in the trading and marketing of meats and meat products. The impartial application of standards and specifications by Federal Meat Graders assures buyers and sellers of an equitable basis for trading. For these services to be meaningful and useful they must be accurately and uniformly applied.

The MGC Branch Internal Review Specialist monitors these services and issues reports which are used as a basis for evaluating the accuracy of grading and certification work. The internal review team will consist of the Internal Review Specialist and one Supervisory Meat Grader who is not responsible for the plant being reviewed.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate in-plant grading and certification work and conduct reviews at packing plants. The internal review team performs an evaluation and assessment function and is not supervisory in nature.
- Collect data and make observations which can be used to analyze trends and patterns in technical programs and to serve as a management tool for MGC Branch supervisors.
- Identify inaccuracies or deficiencies and make recommendations designed to improve the programs of the MGC Branch.
- Submit data and reports that can be used to strengthen technical uniformity and effectiveness of grading and certification.

A. Internal Review Team Operations

1. The internal review team reports to the Assistant Chief.
2. Review sites are selected at random and approved by the Assistant Chief.
3. Review trips are unannounced and incorporate an evaluation of in-plant grading and certification procedures.
4. Through the use of standardized forms, uniform methods for data collection have been established and are followed at each review site.
5. After completing all reviews within an area, the Internal Review Specialist presents

an oral summary of the review to the Assistant Chief.

6. A written report for each review will be submitted by the Internal Review Specialist to the Assistant Chief no later than one week following the review.
7. An exit meeting will be held with the local supervisor, if present, to relay the preliminary results of the internal review.

B. In-Plant Procedures

1. The internal review team's function while in the plant is to observe procedures, make observations, and collect data in a manner that is non-disruptive to the graders and plant operations.
2. The internal review team members will discuss the appropriate and necessary procedures regarding data collection with plant personnel prior to starting the review.
3. Local supervisors may observe and assist the internal review team members. The Internal Review Specialist will review all errors found with the local supervisor, if present, so that the supervisor can discuss any errors and make necessary corrections as needed with the grader(s). If the local supervisor is not present, the Internal Review Specialist will give the grader(s) the opportunity to review any errors noted by the internal review team.
4. At review sites where more than one type of technical operation is being performed (e.g., both grading and certification), the internal review team will record data on each operation.
5. After an in-plant review, the Internal Review Specialist will compile the data collected for the final report to the Assistant Chief. A copy of the final report will be sent to the local supervisor.

C. Carcass Data Collection Procedures

1. The internal review team members will position themselves on the chain at a location sufficiently distant from graders and plant personnel to avoid interfering with the operation. For rail grading, the internal review team members will conduct the review on the same rails that the grader made grade placements. Internal review team members shall perform the review and not make comments regarding grading placements by the grader in a manner that disrupts the grader's attention in providing accurate grade determinations.
2. Using a light meter, the light intensity at the grading chain and/or rail is determined and recorded.
3. The total slaughter, chain speed, bloom time and chill time are determined and recorded.
4. Internal review team members will conduct an Acceptable Quality Level (AQL) on

each grader by randomly selecting every fifth carcass on the grading chain or every third carcass on a rail, according to procedures established and approved by the Assistant Chief. Ungraded as well as quality graded carcasses shall be included in the sample. Carcasses not yield graded will not be included in the yield grading accuracy data.

5. Selected carcasses are identified using the USDA numbered blue tags. As an alternative, reviewers may use the orange USDA Product Control tags. On each carcass selected, the internal review team member records the carcass weight, number or any other identifying number to assure evaluation of the same carcass in the cooler.
6. After carcass selection, the internal review team independently evaluates and records all quality and yield grade factors using all measuring instruments and visual aids issued by the MGC Branch. The final quality and yield grades assigned by the grader are also recorded.
7. A quality or yield grade error is determined only when both internal review team members agree on the final quality and/or yield grade placement of the carcass. Should the internal review team members disagree on the final quality or yield grade, the carcass will not be included in determining overall accuracy for that factor.
8. All identifying marks used by the internal review team will be removed from carcasses when the review is completed and the local supervisor and/or grader(s) have had the opportunity to review any errors noted by the internal review team.
9. Carcasses identified and selected for evaluation on the chain and lost in the cooler will be eliminated from the review, and replacement carcasses will be tagged.
10. If possible, selected carcasses will be evaluated under the same conditions that the grader performed the grading.
11. Internal review team members will also review carcasses certified for any of the applicable carcass schedules: (G1, G2, G7, G23, etc.). The number reviewed and the number not meeting that schedule requirements shall be recorded.

12. A narrative and statistical report detailing all areas evaluated; the number and type of carcasses reviewed on the chain, in the cooler, and regrade rails; the number of errors noted; and the extent of each error will be prepared by the Internal Review Specialist.

D. Meat and Meat Products Certification Data Collection Procedures

1. The internal review team members will review the certification of meat and meat products at processing facilities producing certified Institutional Meat Purchase Specification (IMPS) items, National School Lunch products, and any other meat and meat products requiring federal certification.
2. The internal review team members will conduct the review in a manner that does not interfere with plant operations or the grader's certification functions.
3. All applicable sections of the MGC Branch certification check list will be reviewed.
4. Any deviations from specifications, contracts, MGC Instructions, etc., will be noted and discussed with the local supervisor and/or grader.
5. A narrative report detailing all areas evaluated and any discrepancies noted will be prepared by the Internal Review Specialist.

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